

St. Lawrence County
OFFICE FOR THE AGING

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St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging
Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
November 09, 2009

Meeting called to order at 9:30 am by Bob Mead, Chair. Members present were: Bob Mead, Roger Bennett, Elaine Porter, Ruth Bogardus, Pat Rourk, Gloria Zehr, Florence Patterson, Ruth Ayen, Doris Brown, Ron Frank, Gail Bisonette, and Tedra Cobb. Also present were: guest speaker Linda Buchanan, Registered Dietician Office for the Aging, Karen St. Hilaire County Administrator, Mike Cunningham Interim Director Office for the Aging, Sylvia Despaw, Carlton Doane, and Kathy Skelly. Excused: Robert Miller, Barbara Hance, Sr. Donna Franklin, Debbie Kent. A quorum was established.

Introductions and Welcome:

- Bob Mead introduced our guest, Linda Buchanan Dietician for The Office for the Aging, Karen St. Hilaire County Administrator, and Interim Director for the Office for the Aging Mike Cunningham.

Guest Speaker:

- Linda Buchanan spoke about the Senior Meals Program which is run by the St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging. Linda has been working for two years for the office. Her job consists of visiting each site and giving presentations on Nutrition topics, visiting clients who need counseling, and preparing the menus each month for the program. She tries very hard to not repeat the menu and to keep it interesting to our Home Delivered Meal and Congregate clients. Florence Patterson asked if we could serve healthier food options. Linda stated that people need menu variety to keep them happy. Just because they have a sweet doesn't mean there is not a fruit contained in it. A well balanced meal that they enjoy is very important. Carlton Doane asked about the food supply. Linda replied we do all our purchasing from Sysco which is where the State Contract states we must buy our food. Mike addressed the fact that we are looking into purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables locally. Mike also addressed the fact that total cost of food is only about 30% the rest goes towards wages and fringes for workers making and distributing the meals.
- Karen St. Hilaire County Administrator spoke regarding the management changes in the Office for the Aging. Karen introduced Mike Cunningham as the new Interim Director. Mike is there to help daily events move more efficiently. Karen indicated that she wanted to meet with the Advisory Council to answer any questions they may have. Barb McBurnie has been asked to take another position in the office because it has become known that a stronger person is needed to run the day to day administrative operations of the office. Karen had been working with Barb for over a year regarding her management skills and style. Barb has agreed to stay which means stepping down to take another position within the office.
 - Bob Meade came to the same conclusion when he talked to some of the people in the office.
 - Elaine Porter felt that it was a poor time to put this into effect because of the upcoming open enrollment period.
 - Karen responded that this was an appropriate time since the person previously handling the Medicare enrollments has vacated the position Barb would be moving into. Barb is aware of what needs to be done in this job, so she is the perfect person to fill the position.

- Tedra Cobb said it was a convenient time to make the change; with Sheryl leaving the position Barb could move right in, with very little disruption to anyone in the office.
- Florence Patterson was shocked that the Council was not privy to what was going on.
- Karen agreed and stated that in the future if this should happen, she would send a copy to everyone on the committee.
- Carlton Doane wanted to know if the Advisory Council would be involved in the selection of a permanent replacement.
- Karen said it was up to the Chair of the Board of Legislators, but it should be possible to have two people from the Advisory Council on the Search Committee.
- Doris Brown read a letter from Robert Miller who was not able to attend the Meeting. Doris Brown stated that since the Council had met last in September, no one but Robert Meade and Tedra Cobb were aware of what was going on.
- Tedra Cobb stated that the Advisory Council does not hire and fire. She stated that Barb was serving the senior citizens in St. Lawrence County well, but the management of day to day operations was lacking. The people making the decisions tried not to embarrass Barb during the process; but the decision was made to replace her and Barb chose to accept the Programs Coordinator position
- Florence Patterson wanted to know if Barb had been given the chance for further training to help her progress in becoming a better manager.
- Karen St. Hilaire stated that Barb had been sent to three management training courses over a period of time with not enough improvement being made. She felt that the office needed to go in a new direction and that was a major reason for the change. Karen said that the County must maintain a certain standard which was not being met.
- Carlton Doane wanted to know when a new person comes in, will Barb be expected to train the new person. Tedra Cobb said Barbara is working very closely with Mike and she does not expect that Barb would do anything different with a new person coming in.
- Mike Cunningham: I was appointed in October but Barb did not leave the position until November 1st. She was paid through that date. This has given us a period of adjustment. Barb is a true professional and will help out where she is needed. Barb recognizes that I will not gain anything by this assignment. I would not like to be used, and I will not use Barb.
- St. Hilaire stated that Mike has taken on this extra work with no monetary increase. He is just doing this to help the County and the Office for the Aging. Karen had discussed everything with Robert Mead because she did not want to put Barb in a bad light, but wanted him to know what was going on.
- Tedra Cobb: suggested that if something like this happens again, a special meeting should be called so everyone on the Advisory Council would be informed.
- Elaine Porter suggested it would have been nice if everyone had known that there was a problem.
- Robert Mead indicated that he had gone to the office and was aware of the problems because he had talked to the people involved in the situation.
- Pat Rourke would like to see a copy of the by-laws be redistributed so everyone would be aware of the Advisory Council's functions. He felt that one of the functions is not the management of the office personnel. Our purpose is to be an advocate for the senior population of St. Lawrence County.
- Tedra Cobb felt that if there were problems they should have been brought to the Advisory Council's attention.
- Gloria Zehr was very upset when the letter went out stating that the Advisory Council was unaware of what was going on. No one but Robert Meade and Tedra Cobb knew about what had gone on.
- Tedra Cobb said she could not control what colleagues say. It did not come from her. She did not say that everyone knew and was in agreement on what was said.
- Florence Patterson suggested that perhaps it was time to move forward and she for one would be willing help all she could.

- Karen St. Hilaire: We will be asking for two representatives from the Advisory Council to serve on the search committee for a new director.

Public Comment/Correspondence:

- No public comment or correspondence at this time.

Approval of Minutes:

- Roger Bennett moved to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2009 meeting. Seconded by Florence Patterson. All were in favor- motion carried.

Old Business:

Office for the Aging Report:

- Mike would like to reiterate that he will do what ever he can to help the senior in St. Lawrence County. He feels that it will be a lot of work, but there are great people on the Office for the Aging staff, and that they are all willing to help.
- The Medicare Part D open enrollment period is from November 15th until December 31st. Barb will be working on this with Nancy assisting.

New Business:

StateWide Senior Action Report:

- The Elder Economic Security Initiative is multi-year project of Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) to promote the economic well-being of elders and their families. The Elder Index is a more realistic measure of what it takes to make ends meet and age with dignity. In 2010 a New York Elder Economic Security Initiative will be launched. This initiative will be based on information submitted on county-by-county data and standards. These will identify benchmark levels for comparisons across the state. It is expected that this will be an important tool to develop policy, program development evaluation and planning.
 - This will show the actual costs of expenses for older adults who live in their own homes in today's economy.
 - It will reflect the needs of specific living situations and will include housing, health statuses, and measure cost on a county-by-county basis.
 - This will help us have a broader coalition for advocacy, education and outreach projects. Carlton is trying to set up a video conference so far it only takes in the larger communities. Tedra suggested that perhaps Ruth Fishbeck might be interested in grant writing for this service.

AARP Report:

- The AARP will be sponsoring a basic CPR class. The first one will be held in Potsdam on November 20, 2009. Janet Kelly is coordinating this program. Janet is trying to have classes in Ogdensburg, Massena, and Gouverneur. If you know of anyone interested you can contact Janet at 393-1197.
- We also want people to be aware of our scholarship grants. Please encourage St. Lawrence County high school seniors to apply.
- Yarn and cotton material are also needed for nursing home projects.
- The AARP's next meeting will be November 17, 2009 at the Lookout in Massena. A silent auction and food sale will take place at that meeting. The public is welcome to attend at 1:00 p.m. after the regular meeting has been held. The December meeting will be at the American Legion in Potsdam.

St. Lawrence County Council of Senior Citizens Report:

- The St. Lawrence County Council of Senior Citizens has purchased a television for a fund raiser. Tickets have been given to each club to distribute. The drawing will be at their December meeting.
- Elections for our 2010 officers will be held at the November 12th meeting. Nancy Robert, St. Lawrence County Transportation Coordinator will be the guest speaker. She will be addressing ways we can help with the funding of the senior bus routes.

- Doris Brown and Sylvia Despaw wanted to extend an invitation to Mike Cunningham to attend and speak at the Council of Senior Citizens meeting in November. .

Veteran's Services Report:

- Pat Rourk gave a report on the new program to compensate service members affected by the "Stop Loss" authority. This new initiative pertains to current and former service members who involuntarily served from September 11, 2001 to September 30, 2009. Service members will receive \$500.00 for each month that they serve past the end of their contract. This new program came about as a result of an appropriation bill that was approved by Congress, granting the department \$534 million to compensate affected service members for their time. Service members who would like to take advantage of this program have until October 20, 2010 to apply. They must have been honorably discharged and have appropriate documentation. For additional information go to. Army: <http://www.stoplosspay.army.mil> or e-mail Retrostoplosspay@conus.army.mil , Navy: E-mail to NXAG-N132@navy.mil, Air Force: <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/stoploss/> , Marine Corps: <https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/stoploss> or e-mail to stoploss@usmc.mil
- VA to extend benefits to Veterans affected by Agent Orange. It was announced that the intent to establish resumption of service connection for three additional illnesses associated with Agent Orange exposure. The illnesses recognized to be added are hairy cell leukemia, Parkinson's disease, and Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD). No disposition for claims has been determined. You should file as soon as possible because this could make a difference of several months for accrued benefits.

Medicare Part D.

- Carlton Doane asked what the effect of five companies not renewing their contract with Medicare Part D would mean to individuals who were now covered by them. Mike will have Barb look into this.

Announcements:

- Roger Bennett would like the minutes of the meeting e-mailed to him. Mike said that he would do this again starting with this month's meeting.
- Nominating Committee was set up for next years elections. Sister Donna Franklin will head the committee with Gloria Zehr and Roger Bennett also serving.
- Search Committee for a new director will be Roger Bennett and Ruth Bogardus.
- AIP Review Committee will consist of Carlton Doan, Doris Brown, and Elaine Porter. This is due by December 18th.

Adjournment:

- Motion by Pat Rourk, 2nd by Ruth Bogardus – all in favor; meeting adjourned at 11:17 am.
- Next meeting will be February 8, 2010 at 9:30 in the upstairs conference room at the Human Services Building. .